Price Hike of Petrol

*169. SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA :
SHRI SATYAJITSINH DULIPSINH GAEKWAD :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Petroleum Ministry has suggested the Government for a price hike in petroleum products;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether they have suggested a number of proposals to meet the burgeoning oil pool deficit which is now estimated to touch 14,700 crores in March this year;

(d) if so, whether the Government have not accepted the proposals for increasing price hike in petroleum products and have decided to borrow the money instead;

(e) whether any final decision has been taken in this regard; and

(f) if not, the time by which it is likely to be finalised ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU) : (a) to (f) The prices of petroleum products are administered by the Government through the Oil Pool Account mechanism. The oil pool accounts are supposed to be self balancing. It was estimated that the cumulative outstandings of the oil companies would be Rs. 5700 crores by 31.3.96. However, the pool account got adversely affected in Oct. 96 due to steep increase in the prices of the crude oil & petroleum products in the international market, Rupee-Dollar exchange rate variation, increase in the Rail freight and changes in the Customs & Excise duty announced in the Finance Bill for 1996-97. The cumulative outstandings of the oil companies from pool account are estimated to be Rs. 15,500 crores as on 31.3.97.

The mounting outsanding have resulted in oil companies experiencing severe cash crunch necessitating them to resort to huge borrowings which are estimated to rise to a level of Rs. 23,000 crores by 31.3.97.

The imports of crude oil & petroleum products have to be organised to maintain uninterruped supply of petroleum products within the country. As a short term measure, the ceiling of short term foreign currency borrowings of IOC the canalising agency was enhanced from USD 1.53 billion to USD 2 billion in February 96, to USD 2.5 billion in Nov. 96 and USD 2.9 billion in February 97.

The position of the oil pool account is monitored on a continuous basis and Government is exploring various options to contain the deficit in the oil pool account.

Nuclear Power Generation

*170. SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether in view of the environmental costs involved in hydel power generation and the multifarious problems faced in establishing and running thermal power plants away from coal-mines, Government propose to give a major thrust to nuclear power generation, inviting private participation in the process;

(b) if so, whether any concrete policy in this regard is being worked out;

(c) if so, the details of the proposed scheme by which nuclear power will be given high priority; and

(d) the Ninth Five Year Plan target fixed in respect of Nuclear Power generation in the public and private sectors and the estimated cost thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) to (c) : The Government propose to continue with its nuclear programme and are open to specific offers of private participation. Such offers when received will be considered on the basis of technical suitability, economic attractiveness and conditions attached thereto. Amendments to the Atomic Energy Act 1962 as may be necessary will be considered at the appropriate time when private participation is likely to become a reality.

(d) IX Five Year Plan proposals are yet to be finalised.

Development of Backward/Tribal Areas

*171. SHRI N.J. RATHWA :
SHRIMATI CHHABILA ARVIND NETAM :

Will the Minister of PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Central Government have sanctioned any scheme for the development of backward/ tribal areas during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(c) the year-wise allocation of fund made during the said period, State-wise;

(d) the details of other schemes submitted by the States in particular by the Government of Gujarat for seeking financial assistance as on date;

(e) the number of projects out of them related to tribal dominated areas; and